

# KĀLIDĀSA



PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

March 1968 (Chennai 1968)

2003  
5083

# KĀLIDĀSA



*Talks broadcast from All India Radio*  
**selected and edited by**  
**Dr. V. RAGHAVAN**



PUBLICATION DIVISIONS  
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting  
Government of India

March 1966 (Chaitra 1888)

KALIDAS

27.6.94

85/4



Price : 75 Paise



PUBLISHED BY THE DIRECTOR, PUBLICATIONS DIVISION, DELHI-6  
AND PRINTED BY THE MANAGER, GOVT. OF INDIA PRESS, FARIDABAD.



## PREFACE

During the period 1959-61, when I was Special Adviser for Sanskrit for the All India Radio, I organised and supervised, on an all-India basis, a well-planned and co-ordinated Sanskrit programme comprising talks, play-productions, recordings of *Vedas*, hymns, etc., and celebrations of Kālidāsa Day and other special events and occasions of significance for Sanskrit. At that time I had also, with the facilities and encouragement that were extended to me by the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Dr. B. V. Keskar, and by the Director-General of A.I.R., Sri J. C. Mathur, taken on hand the collection and editing of select radio talks on Sanskrit subjects. The first collection of talks, consisting of twenty-three short studies of the Sanskrit language and its literature, including some major works and authors, was brought out by me in 1961.

As there were a number of talks on Kālidāsa and his works, it was decided to devote to the great poet one separate volume comprising a selection of the talks on his genius and creations.

Kālidāsa is truly a national poet. It is in his works that an image of one-India is projected. It is in his poems and plays that one sees what place the Himalaya has in the Indian mind, what part it has played in the life and history of the nation and what this parent of Pārvatī, this abode of Śiva and this source of the Gaṅgā and the other holy rivers of Bhāratavarṣa has meant to the people. This collection of talks on Kālidāsa is significant, especially in the context of recent events.

There have of course been a large number of talks on the A.I.R. on Kālidāsa, in the general programmes series as well as on special occasions; and on a subject of such universal interest there is bound to be a considerable amount of repetition and the quality of the expositions may not always be equal. To have, therefore, enough material to choose from, special efforts were made to gather as many talks on Kālidāsa as could be collected, not only from the different A.I.R. Stations but also through my



personal contacts with scholar-friends in the country who participated in these talks.

In making a selection from these talks, the different aspects of the poet, his genius and his works, have been kept in view. That the larger cultural significance of the poet's contributions has also been borne in mind will be evident in the concluding selections in the volume. To the general reader this volume would, I am sure, serve to provide an introduction to the great poet and his masterpieces and help in the appreciation of his art.

V. RAGHAVAN

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2009

## KĀLIDĀSA\*

Dr. P. V. Rajamannar

Kālidāsa is the most luminous star in the firmament of Sanskrit literature. Time has not dimmed the effulgence of his genius. He is one of the few ancient Indian poets who have a world-wide reputation. Succeeding poets in India vied with one another in paying their tributes to him and among them were poets of the first rank. Jayadeva calls him *Kavikulaguru*; and Kālidāsa remains ever the acknowledged master-poet. He has been compared by some to Shakespeare and by others to Virgil. These comparisons are not illuminating enough and are often found to be misleading.

Kālidāsa is almost unique in his achievement in one respect. He is as great as a poet as he is as a playwright. In the history of the world's literature, there are only a few such instances. In the short space at my disposal, I can only briefly deal with his works, the four poems, namely, *Ṛtusamhāra*, *Meghadūta*, *Kumārasambhava* and *Raghuvamśa* and the three plays, *Mālavikāgnimitra*, *Vikramorvaśīya* and *Abhijñānaśākuntala*.

Though doubts have been raised regarding the authorship of *Ṛtusamhāra*, the balance of opinion has been in favour of accepting it as a genuine work of Kālidāsa, though probably it was the work of his youth. The poem describes the cycle of six seasons. It is not a description of the seasons in their outward aspect. The poet describes each season in relation to the love-life of man and woman. In this sense, the dominant *rasa* may be said to be *śṛṅgāra*. The poem is, however, full of delightful vignettes of nature in its varied seasonal moods. Kālidāsa's powers of minute observation of nature which reach their heights in *Meghadūta* and *Kumārasambhava* are already evident in this poem. It is full of happy concepts, as for instance when autumn is compared to a young bride dressed in a garment of sugarcane, girdled with ripening rice and with the face of a lotus blossom.

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\*AIR, Madras, 1952



Beginning with *grīṣma* (summer), the poet describes how lovers can enjoy each season in its own way and the poem ends with a brilliant description of *vasanta* (spring), a season dearest to the hearts of lovers. It is a precursor to the more famous description of spring in *Kumārasambhava*. As Keith remarks, "The poem in every line reveals youth". One might miss here the ethical touch which one finds in his other *kāvya*s. But the subject and treatment of the theme would have made any such purpose inappropriate; and Kālidāsa is rarely guilty of *anauṇīya*.

If *Rtusamhāra* is the work of his youth, *Meghadūta* is the work of his maturity. The masterly way in which he wields the elaborate *mandākrāntā* metre in this poem is a sufficient proof of this. *Meghadūta* is really a descriptive poem, in parts lyrical, in parts elegiac. The slender thread of the story furnishes the human element which links man to nature. It relates the story of a Yakṣa who has been banished from his home for a year for neglect of duty, and is spending his time in Rāmagiri Āsrama in the South, far away from his native city of Alakā near the lake Mānasa. The approach of the rainy season (*āṣāḍhasya prathama divase*) reminds him poignantly of his wife who is lamenting for him in their abode at Alakā. He begs the passing cloud—a lover is bereft of reason—to take his message to his beloved. He describes to the cloud in detail the route to Alakā from Rāmagiri. From the South to the Himalayas the Yakṣa describes the landmarks—the mountains and the rivers, the countries and the cities. We are unable to identify with certainty some of these landmarks but there are those which are well-known, like the Vindhyas, the Narmadā, Avanti, Ujjain, Kurukshetra, the Gaṅgā and the Himalayas. At last the cloud would reach the city of Alakā; the splendour of that city is lavishly portrayed. The Yakṣa describes the features of his house so that the cloud can identify it. In the garden, there is a coral tree and a flight of emerald steps leads to a well in which golden lotuses bloom. The love-sick Yakṣa imagines how his beloved would be spending her days; she might be awake and waiting for him or she might be asleep dreaming of him. He requests the cloud-messenger not to wake her up rudely if she is asleep. The Yakṣa then gives the message which is to be delivered to his wife, a message overflowing with passionate love.

In the originality of its conception, in the delicacy of its sentiment, in its flights of imagination, in its pen-pictures of the beauties of nature in all its aspects and in its richness of content, coupled with an admirable brevity of expression, *Meghadūta* has few equals in the world's literature and none to excel it. If imitation is the best form of praise, there is no doubt that the poem has received the highest praise. Several poets have tried to imitate the general scheme of *Meghadūta* in their poems. However, none of these poems, though following the same technique, can be placed by the side of the original.

*Kumārasaṁbhava* is a poem of greater amplitude. It is much longer and has a greater story content and a larger variety of topics and situations. The main story must have been quite familiar to every one at the time. It tells the story of Śiva's marriage to Umā, the daughter of Himavān, and the birth of Skanda or Kumāra. We do not know how many cantos Kālidāsa really wrote. It is accepted on all hands that the first seven cantos are undeniably his. The seventh canto ends with the wedding of Śiva and Umā. We find ten more cantos in many manuscripts. The general opinion, however, as regards these cantos is against the authorship of Kālidāsa, excepting probably the eighth canto.

The poem begins with one of the most brilliant pieces of description of mountain scenery in any literature. Kālidāsa was obviously familiar with the Himalayas and he certainly loved those ice-clad mountains. Śiva is shown as sitting in a holy grove amidst mountains, absorbed in deep meditation while Umā with her maiden friends waits upon him, fetching him flowers and water and sweeping the altar. In the second canto the scene changes. There is consternation among the *devatās* caused by the demon Tāraka. Brahmā, the God of Creation, feels himself helpless and thinks that a deliverer can only be the offspring of Śiva and Umā. Indra, the Lord of Devas then sends for Kāma, the God of Love, to help him in his endeavour to see that the union of Śiva and Umā is brought about.

The third canto deals with the famous episode known as *Kāmadahana*, the burning of the God of Love. Kāma is very jubilant and confident of his success if only *vasanta* (spring) would aid him and of course his own wife, Rati. It begins with a glorious description of the advent of spring. Kāma comes



along with Rati, his consort, to the place where Śiva is in meditation but at the sight of Śiva his courage fails. There Śiva sat

“Calm as a full cloud resting on a hill,  
A waveless lake when every breeze is still,  
Like a torch burning in a sheltered spot,  
So still was He, unmoving, breathing not”.

When Kāma sees Umā coming along with her maidens, he again takes courage. Śiva is moved by Umā's devotion and tells her that she will be blessed with a husband who will love none other than her. Kāma seizes this moment to discharge his arrow of love at Śiva. Śiva is perturbed at this disturbance of his tranquil soul, and on looking round sees Kāma with his bent bow. From his eyes flash red flames of fury, and Kāma is reduced to ashes. Śiva leaves the place for some other quieter abode. The fourth canto is devoted to the lament of Rati for her dead husband. Rarely do we find in Sanskrit literature pathos so profoundly depicted.

The fifth canto finds Umā bitterly despondent and determined to perform *tapas* until she achieves her object. Śiva comes to her in the guise of a *brahmacārīn* and tests her love by decrying himself. Umā does not listen to such talk and Śiva reveals himself. In the succeeding canto we have the prologue to the wedding. The seven *Ṛṣis* and Arundhatī come to Himavān to seek Umā's hand for Śiva, and finally the wedding day is fixed and the seventh canto describes the wedding with an abundance of detail which Kālidāsa is likely to have drawn from his first-hand knowledge of royal weddings.

*Raghuvamśa* is the most ambitious of all the poetical works of Kālidāsa. It is an excellent specimen of the *Mahākāvya*. It has epic dimensions. The canvas is so vast that there is room in it for campaigns, battles, embassies, meetings of councils, weddings, sports and entertainments besides descriptions of towns, oceans, mountains and rivers. There is scope for the development of different *rasas*. The poem gives opportunity to display Kālidāsa's powers of narration, description and comment.

The poem starts with king Dilipa who is childless. He worships the cow Nandini and saves her from a lion by offering



his own body; thus pleased, Nandini grants him his cherished wish and Raghu is born. Then there is the story of the horse-sacrifice after which Dilipa surrenders the kingdom to his son, Raghu, and retires to the forest to lead the life of a *Vānaprastha* and thus ends the third canto. The fourth canto relates the mighty deeds of Raghu and his dominion all over India, Vaṅga, Kāliṅga, Pāṇḍya and Kerala. In the next canto, we have the episode of the Brahmin Kautsa which illustrates the generosity of Raghu, and the birth of his son, Aja. In canto six, we find a brilliant account of the *svayaṁvara* of Indumatī. Indumatī gives her hand and heart to Aja at the *svayaṁvara* in preference to other princes whom Aja later defeats in battle. Aja reigns while Raghu leads the life of a hermit and subsequently leaves his body by *Yoga*. Aja, however, is not destined to be happy. While he and Indumatī are together, a garland blown by the wind falls on her breast and she dies. Aja, in spite of his knowledge and philosophic outlook, is unable to console himself and broken-hearted he gives up his life. Here pathos is at its height. Then begins the reign of Daśaratha and the incident of his mortally wounding the son of a hermit during a hunt and the curse of the parents of the boy. Thus from canto eight onwards we have the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa*. The sixteenth canto deals with the reign of Kuśa, one of the sons of Rāma at Kuśāvati and his coming back to Ayodhyā, the old capital. Thereafter the cantos relate the story of the unworthy successors of Rāma's line till finally the whole dynasty ends with the worthless debauchee, Agnivarṇa.

Of the three plays, *Mālavikāgnimitra* is unquestionably the earliest. We have clear internal evidence of this fact in the prologue, which contains a sort of apology for presenting a play by a new writer like Kālidāsa, when there were famous plays by dramatists like Bhāsa and Saumilla. The play belongs to a type familiar in Sanskrit drama dealing with the new love of a *Dakṣiṇa Nāyaka*, a king who could afford to have a number of wives. The heroine is Mālavikā, a Vidarbha princess, who, owing to several misfortunes, is living incognito among the retinue of King Agnimitra's senior queen, Dhārṇī. Agnimitra has, besides Dhārṇī, a younger queen, Irāvati. The King falls for Mālavikā when he sees her picture and wholly loses his heart to her as she exhibits her skill

in singing and dancing. The play consists of episodes in which the attempts of the Vidūṣaka, the king's jester, to bring about a meeting of the king and Mālavikā, variedly fail and succeed. Eventually, Mālavikā is recognised as the princess and is married to the king with the consent of the two queens. It is by no means a great play. The hero is weakly drawn and does not command our admiration. But the portrayal of the two queens is well done, Dhārīṇī with her dignified grace, generous to the point of magnanimity and Irāvati, jealous and impulsive.

*Vikramorvaśīya* also deals with a similar theme; the love of King Purūravas and Urvaśī, the apsara. Urvaśī is described as a courtesan, though of the celestial variety. She is shown as being swayed only by passions and she has no love even for her child. The high water mark of the play is reached in the fourth Act, when Urvaśī in a fit of anger, following a lovers' quarrel, enters the grove forbidden to women and is turned into a creeper. The king goes about seeking her and asking news of her from the peacock, the cuckoo and the bee, the elephant and the antelope, till finally with the help of a magic stone he succeeds, the creeper changing back into Urvaśī. In this Act, the play reaches lyrical heights hardly equalled in Sanskrit drama, but otherwise the play is not particularly remarkable.

*Śakuntala* is certainly Kālidāsa's masterpiece. In it he reached the perfection of his art as a playwright. It is one of the great dramas of the world. Age cannot wither its beauty nor can familiarity breed contempt for it. The story of the play is so universally known that it will be an insult to the listeners to recount it. The play has been translated into all the languages in India and into almost all the languages of the world. The famous German poet and playwright, Goethe, has sung rapturously about it. Of all the women Kālidāsa has painted in his works, Śakuntalā stands out as the most exquisite. Though she is born of a nymph and loves and marries a mighty monarch, she really belongs to the Āśrama. It is only in Śakuntalā that Kālidāsa has drawn a full-length portrait of a woman. He has shown the development of her personality from an innocent demure maiden in Act I to the mature lady in the final Act after she has gained spirit and depth by her suffering. Duṣyanta is a more worthy hero than Agnimitra or Purūravas. He is not a mere profligate or



sensualist and the incident of Durvāsas' curse takes away any reproach from his conduct in rejecting Śakuntalā when she goes to his court. The other characters also are well drawn; Kaṇva of course takes away the honours. If the fourth Act has been admired so much through the ages, it is largely due to the figure of Kaṇva, an ascetic, though not without the tenderest human feelings. Even the two companions of Śakuntalā are not roughly sketched. They are both finished specimens of a master-dramatist's art. Each has her own individual temperament. Anasūyā is serious and wise while Priyamvadā is gay and loquacious. Likewise, the two disciples of Kaṇva differ. Śārṅgarava is impetuous, proud and harsh but Śaradvata is calm, restrained and kind. And it is impossible to resist a reference to the lively scene in which the fisherman is tormented by the police officers. One can spend any length of time dwelling on the beauties of this play.

Though scholars may have their controversies as regards the date of Kālidāsa and whether he was one of the nine gems of Vikramāditya's court or not, one thing appears clearly from his works. He lived in an age of great material prosperity and high human endeavour, in an age similar to the age of Pericles in Athens and the age of Queen Elizabeth I in England. It was an age of pomp, pageantry and power, an age of intellectual brilliance and intense literary and artistic activity. Kālidāsa's works reflect all the glory that was India in those spacious days. Not only in *Raghuvamśa*, which is a chronicle of kings, but even in a love-play like *Mālavikāgnimitra*, we have in the background news of military expeditions.

Kālidāsa's works reveal ancient Indian culture in all its fulness, completeness and perfection. Obviously, he lived at a time when the ideal of life embodied in the fourfold scheme of the *Puruṣārthas* and the *Āśramas* was prominent. Kālidāsa's kings are splendid illustrations of this ideal. In boyhood they devote their time to learning; in youth they enjoy the pleasures of love; in old age they lead the life of an ascetic; and finally attain *mokṣa* when they leave their mortal bodies. In Kālidāsa we find a happy blending of the secular and spiritual values of life. The court and the hermitage, the battle-field and the pleasure-garden have their due place in Kālidāsa's panorama.



Kālidāsa is pre-eminently a poet of love. He excels in the depiction of *śṛṅgāra* in all its richness and variety. But there is always the ethical strain running as an undercurrent. Both in *Kumāra-sambhava* and in *Śākuntala* his main stress is on the idea that love is purified by suffering. However alluring the physical aspect of love may be, it is the spiritual aspect which is more abiding. Both Śiva and Umā are moved by physical passion at first when Kāma wields his bow and arrow. But they meet again after both have undergone the discipline of an austere penance. Śakuntalā yields to Duṣyanta because she cannot resist physical craving. But it is only after intense pain of separation that she becomes purified and realizes love on a higher plane in the final Act in the Āśrama of Mārīca, with Bharata as the living embodiment of her love.

It is impossible to speak too highly of Kālidāsa's mastery of the language, the richness of his diction, the economy of his expression and the delicacy of his style. He belongs to the first rank of poets who prefer suggestion (*dhvani*) to elaborate statement. He is never guilty of over-drawing on sentiment. He never paints with a thick brush. He has been renowned for his similes (*Upamā Kālidāsasya*). It is by similes that the poet's greatness is revealed. For, poetry is the art of relating things, of linking man to nature and provoking imagination by suggestion.

I shall close by quoting one of his verses in *Śākuntala* in which Duṣyanta describes Śakuntalā in all the sweetness of her innocence:

*anāghrātāṃ puṣpaṃ kisalayam alūnaṃ kararuhaiḥ  
anāviddhaṃ ratnaṃ madhu navam anāsvādita-rasaṃ  
akhaṇḍam puṇyānām phalam api ca tadrūpam anaghaṃ  
na jāne bhoktāraṃ kam iha samupasthāsyati vidhiḥ.*

We may translate this into other languages. But how can any translation bring out the beauty of the original ? The least homage that Indians of today can render to Kālidāsa is to learn the language in which he wrote so that they can read his works in the original.

## THE UNIVERSALITY OF KĀLIDĀSA'S MUSE\*

Dr. V. Raghavan

There are old legends about Kālidāsa; there are also the theories of modern scholars who have been trying to determine when and where the poet flourished. It cannot be said that they have succeeded in pinning Kālidāsa to a particular time or place. The poet's intimate acquaintance with Kashmir-Himalayas has been argued; his special descriptions of Avanti, Ujjain and Vidiśā are well known; but Kālidāsa has also touched, with a surprising intimacy many far-flung parts of the country, including, in the South, the Cauvery, the Pandyan regions with their areca-palms twined with betel-vine and sandal trees clasped by cardamom growths and the tresses of Kerala women. There is something in his works for everyone to feel as his own; Kālidāsa is indeed the poet of all India. In point of time, efforts have been made to show that he lived in the first century before Christ or in the fourth century after; it is as well that we can say nothing definite about this; if he belongs to no particular time, he also belongs to no particular place. Neither spatial nor temporal limitation can be set to his personality, appeal or influence. In more recent times, the fame of the poet has gone far beyond the Himalayas and the *mahodadhi* that he described. It is through the *Gītā* and *Śākuntala* of Kālidāsa that the West came to know first of Indian literature; and today, there is hardly a cultivated language in the world into which Kālidāsa has not been translated. A poet may be a nation-wide celebrity but for transcending the national *milieu* and traditions, there should be more intrinsic virtues of style and expression, more fundamental ideas and more enduring values in the poet's writings which give him an appeal that is universal; and such appeal Kālidāsa commands today.

Bharata says in his *Nāṭya Śāstra* that there is no system of

\*AIR, Madras, 1958



thought, no learning of art which does not become part of poetry, and the poet and critic, Rājaśekhara observes that all branches of knowledge meet on the common platform of literature. This is a quality which pertains to the work of the greatest poets of the world whose knowledge, experience and imagination touch almost everything in their sweep. In India, the critics have always placed the great poets by the side of the sages and the eminent men of thought, the *ṛsis* and the very designation of a poet, *Kavi* has been explained as meaning "a man of far-reaching vision". The whole succession of poets who appeared after Kālidāsa have no doubt considered him as their *guru*, and whether it is in epic, lyric or drama, they have all essayed to follow in his footsteps. What is more significant is that even philosophers and schoolmen have accepted the poet's greatness. An eminent philosopher like Kumārila has cited Kālidāsa in his *Mīmāṃsā*; the *Śāktas* consider Kālidāsa as one of their teachers; many later mythological texts have drawn on his *Kumārasambhava* and *Raghuvamśa*. Without appearing to bear a load of learning, the poet has, with a smiling ease, made his verses expressive, which by their rich overtones, flash forth the wisdom of the *Śāstras*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Sāṅkhya* or *Vedānta*, the *Artha Śāstra* or *Kāma Śāstra*, grammar or poetics, music, dance or drama. The votary of every one of these will, when he reads Kālidāsa, feel that the poet had made a minute study of his own speciality, and the poet's precious observations illumine especially the subject of his own interest. This is so because Kālidāsa represents the quintessence of Indian culture and heritage, and whether it is a native who wants to partake of it or an outsider who seeks an authentic messiah of it, to both of them, Kālidāsa is the most satisfactory and at the same time the most attractive exponent of it.

The universality of Kālidāsa's appeal lies also in the mastery with which the poet's genius passes from one form to another; in epic or lyric, or in drama of one kind or another, his hand is at home and equally consummate. Again, in imagery and *Upamā* he has no equal; in natural description, his miniatures are exquisite; in the precious maxims and observations which are strewn all over his writings, he reveals his deep understanding of human character. If one may not tarry to look into the



meaning and would fain fill his ears with the mere lilt of the lines and the sweetness of the words, one has to take up Kālidāsa; but if one is in another mood and wants in the poet of his choice precise phrasing, proportion, restraint, delicacy, sensitiveness, and above all, a profound suggestiveness—qualities that pertain to all great literature, whatever its place or period of origin—one can again go to none else. If we take drama, the less evolved ones desirous of artistry and a dexterously woven story, the intensely human ones, delighting in lyrical rapport, or the high-minded ones yearning for the Himalayan heights of the soul's sublimity, all these will find what they want in *Mālavikāgnimitra*, *Vikramorvaṣīya* and *Śākuntala*. In depicting *rasa*, Kālidāsa is both the norm and the culmination of art; this is conceded on all hands especially in respect of his depiction of the sentiment of love. In pathos some would consider Bhavabhūti to have excelled; but the critics have not been slow to point out how, at the same time, the author of *Uttararāmacarita* is prone to flaws from which Kālidāsa has been singularly free. In fact, what picture can be more poignant than *Śākuntalā* of the latter Acts, or Sītā of the fourteenth canto of *Raghuvamśa*, pictures to which Bhavabhūti himself owes his inspiration. Kālidāsa observes more than once that men differ in their tastes, but as the poet himself speaks of the art of drama and its universal appeal, we can say of Kālidāsa's muse: that in a world of varying tastes, it is the one gratifier of all—*bhinna-rucer janasya bahūdhāpyekam samārādhanam*.

In the hands of a real poet, there is no question of the themes of his writings being old or new; for, as in the case of sentiment and feeling, the particular is only an illustration of the universal, and it is the eternal verities of life that form, in the ultimate analysis, the aim of the poet's attention. It is in this sense that a literary masterpiece renews itself in every age; a contemporary significance always manifests itself as every age looks into a classic for answers to its own questions and responses to its own impulses and aspirations. The *arthāntaranyāsas* and the *subhāṣitas*, in which again Kālidāsa's poems abound, form one line in which the poet gives expression to the truths and norms of life. There are also other observations of the poet, which, like some stones, though apparently plain, begin to scintillate when some fresh or

special light is turned on them. The gifted critic Abhinavagupta, when drawing out wave after wave of meaning from a verse, asks himself how this is proper or possible, and answers: 'The poet has created, the poem is our property and it is also a *Kāma-dhenu*, the wish-yielding cow of plenty.' It is this endless possibility that extends the significance of a poet beyond the limitations of time and place. For example, Kālidāsa's kings are drawn from myths and ancient annals but the picture he has drawn of an ideal ruler or a state is something which could yield useful ideas even in modern times. The sovereignty of the peoples' interest is brought out by him in his elucidation that the satisfaction of the people is literally the very meaning of the king's name *rājā*, *rājā prakṛti-rañjanāt*; and in his conception of the state as the super-parent, one can see the welfare state of today in which the education and discipline, the security and the all-round upbringing and nourishment of the people are all the responsibility of the state: *Prajānāṁ vinayādhānad rakṣaṇād bharaṇādapi Sa pitā, pitarastāsāṁ kevalaṁ janma-hetavaḥ*

Indian poetic theory explains that the very basis of our enjoyment of a poem or play is due to the fact that, by virtue of the operation of the poet's imaginative faculty and the artistic resources of his expression, a universalisation takes place in the moods and feelings represented as pertaining to appointed persons and contexts. This universalisation effects in these moods and feelings a sublimity and makes them delectable wherever or whenever a poem or play is read or acted. This sublime artistic delectation is a co-operative creative activity in which the two partners are the poet and the reader, the dramatist and the spectator. To evoke or ensure the communion of these two phases of artistic activity, the Indian critics say, it is necessary, that the emotions handled by the poet should not be transient or trifling or obscure, but should be dominant and enduring moods of universal vogue and response. Of these again, the most fundamental is the sentiment of love. By the consensus of opinion, Kālidāsa is supreme in depicting this sentiment whose touch makes the whole world kin. He has depicted love in all its phases and in a variety of characters. He has drawn the animals and birds and even the trees and creepers into the magic spell of this great emotion. Before Śakuntalā marries, she celebrates the marriage of the Vana-



jyotsnā creeper with the mango tree and when she leaves the hermitage, she takes leave not only of her foster-father, but of the deer and the cuckoo, and not only do the men and women there shed tears, but the very trees and creepers do likewise by shedding their blossoms. Love, such as has been presented by Kālidāsa, is an image of an original union from which the soul has split and fallen apart; in every bosom heaves this mystic nostalgia for the come-back of the departed into their native state of integration; the separation is due to a curse, but its very suffering forms the *tapas* and *yoga* leading to the reunion. It is this meaning above all, which lifts up the creations of Kālidāsa's muse into visions of immortality, into glimpses of that everlasting and universal Truth, with which, like the poet, one day or the other, everyone of us hankers to be united:

*mamāpi ca kṣapayatu nīlahūtaḥ  
 punarbhavāni parigata-śaktirātmabhūh.*

## KĀLIDĀSA'S SIMILES\*

I. Dr. V. Raghavan

According to an old saying of Indian savants, simile forms the forte of Kālidāsa, *Upamā Kālidāsasya*. Similes, comparisons, metaphors and imagery are not mere embellishments; they are the doors through which the poet's vision reaches out on all sides, and reveals things in an undreamt of relatedness. They are not external additions but are of the very texture and making of the poet's expression. Kālidāsa is exceptionally rich in similes. The chief features of Kālidāsa's similes are variety, grace, aptness and suggestiveness. Perhaps no other example is necessary than his poem *Meghadūta* to show the capacity of his muse to make an endless variety of images out of the single substance of the cloud. Familiar objects like the lotus and the moon, or the creeper and the flower are no doubt used by him frequently, but never in the same way, so that these eternally beautiful things shine, every time the poet touches them, with a fresh radiance and significance.

Kālidāsa's similes are sometimes simple, sometimes completely worked out in the details. They are drawn from diverse fields, from flora and fauna, from the other aspects of nature, from human behaviour, from old literature, myth and tradition, from the different arts, and from intellectual concepts and abstractions. Even in the case of similes from the sphere of intellectual conceptions, the poet displays an aptness and suggestiveness. For example, in his *Raghuvamśa*, Kālidāsa twice presses into service the science of grammar and its concepts for comparison. When Rāma removed Vālin and set up Sugrīva in his place, Kālidāsa compares it to the *ādeśa* of a root or *dhātu* superseding the latter as the functionally useful form of the verb; this applies exactly to the relation between Vālin and Sugrīva in which, though Vālin was the elder and the more important, for the purpose on hand for Rāma, it is the younger Sugrīva who was useful.

\*National programme, Kālidāsa Day celebrations of AIR, 1958



There are numerous similes of Kālidāsa which are original to him. We may refer now to only one simile for whose originality Kālidāsa gained even a sobriquet.

In the *svayamvara* of Indumati in the *Raghuvamśa*, there was a row of royal suitors sitting, and as Indumati passed before each, the face of the person before whom she was for the nonce beamed with light, but plunged back into darkness again as Indumati passed him without garlanding him. This is compared by Kālidāsa to a city street in the night, along which a light is being taken; when the mansion in front of which the light is for the moment becomes bright, but becomes dark again as the light passes beyond that house. For this striking simile, the poet has become celebrated as *Dīpa-śikhā-Kālidāsa*.

The similes of Kālidāsa have been collected, but so far only stray studies of these have been made. Here we have a brief international symposium on Kālidāsa's similes; orientalists from different countries speak to you now about Kālidāsa's similes.

Prof. Hideo Kimura, Professor of Sanskrit and Buddhist Studies, Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan, compares Kālidāsa's similes with those employed in old Japanese poems of the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries preserved in an ancient Japanese anthology.

Dr. van Buitenan of the Chicago University points out how through the similes, Kālidāsa has shown the inter-relatedness of things and through it, the unity of the world. Prof. Louis Renou of Sorbonne has drawn attention to the fact that Indian poetry, and Kālidāsa's pre-eminently, makes no difference between the world of matter and the world of spirit, between things outside and the things inside. The creeper and the deer, the cloud and the mountain, are all personified, and the whole nature is instinct with life and feeling: *jātaṁ rasamayam jagat*.

## II. Prof. Louis Renou

The poetry of Kālidāsa forms an excellent field of experience for studying a way of style. For, while being a learned source of inspiration like all Indian poetry, it moves in the path of the natural and of relative simplicity. As in all poetical works in

Sanskrit, imagery plays a considerable part in it. One can hardly conceive of a single stanza which is bereft of a simile or of a metaphor. And these images, contrary to what is found in our literature, are pursued into details in such a manner that for each element of the principal phrase there is a corresponding element in the phrase which gives the comparison. It is not considered enough to say that the bridge leading from the Indian continent to Lañkā divides the ocean, as the Milky Way divides the nocturnal sky. The poet specifies, as *Raghuvamśa* shows, that the water with its foamy crests of waves evokes a picture of the serene firmament where the stars shine. Thus there reigns a kind of balance between the two parts of a sentence. Besides, it happens that a single word, used just once, applies at the same time to the principal phrase with a specific sense and to the phrase of comparison in a distant sense—a remarkable thing made possible by the power of multiple sense in the Sanskrit language which has hardly any equivalent in our languages.

The contents of the images of Kālidāsa are very varied, as, naturally, they are taken from the physical world—animals, plants and inanimate nature. But more often than with us, the image carries also a sort of abstract idea, because there is not in India that feeling of heterogeneity that we perceive between the spirit and the body, between the abstract and the concrete. Many images are learned representations drawn from one or another erudite discipline, even from grammar. Many arise from religious experience. It is true that in India this religious experience is often itself a concrete image. It is visual rather than spiritual. One can say that a number of these images of Kālidāsa, as in the case of others, are survivals of old correlations between the microcosm and the macrocosm which had received sanction in the hymns of the *Vedas*. The flow of images is one of the reasons which has led to the idea that the poetry suffers from preciousity. Preciousity is in fact a trait which affects many literatures at a certain stage of their development. The reproach against this kind of affectation is easy to make. Is it completely justified? In *Meghadūta*, the master-piece of Kālidāsa, the young man separated from his beloved confides his despair to a cloud which passes by, and whom he charges with carrying



a message of love to the young woman. He describes to the cloud the state of prostration in which he imagines his beloved to be and, addressing himself directly to the cloud, he says, "She will make you shed tears made of your newly gathered water, for", he adds in the form of a maxim: (the presence of maxims here and there is a special trait of Sanskrit poetry) "generally he whose heart is tender, is compassionate."

This is banal, one might say. But it regains its savour if one reminds oneself that the word 'tender' also means 'humid' and applies well in describing the cloud, always ready to shed the water it carries in its bosom. Occidentals will charge such images with preciousness. However, in India, they are the almost normal correlations of which I spoke, between the world of the sense and the world of the interior. The cloud is a human person. One speaks to it as to a being full of compassion, and the rain which it releases is equated, without difficulty, to tears. Needless to say, analogous representations are found in all poetical literature. They are nowhere so constant—I would say natural—as in Sanskrit poetry.\*

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\*English Translation : Mrs. Radha Burnier, Adyar Library



## KĀLIDĀSA'S MEGHADŪTA

Dr. V. Raghavan

I

*Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa has the double distinction of being a work of the foremost poet in Sanskrit and the foremost lyrical poem in that language. The poet flourished in the first century before Christ, or according to many others, in the fourth century after Christ, and wrote three plays, two long epic poems, and two lyrics, one on the Cycle of the Seasons and the other, *Meghadūta*.

Kālidāsa is the pre-eminent poet of love; he is unrivalled in his skill in depicting this sentiment, whatever phase of it he takes up, the tender and glowing feeling in the young, the artistry of courtship in the experienced, love in ardent longing, in delicate or varied enjoyment, or in those pangs of separation in which, as he says, the burning suffering welds, as it were, the two souls together. More striking than this is the fact that in his poems, no less than in his plays, he delights to give the background of nature, — of mountain, river and forest, and portrays the effect of these on the human heart. *Meghadūta* too illustrates conspicuously this special charm of Kālidāsa's poetry.

As a piece of artistic creation, *Meghadūta* is a brilliant achievement of the genius of Kālidāsa. We may trace the roots of his inspiration to compose this little masterpiece, but the shape it has taken in his imagination makes it a unique expression of the poet's originality. There can be no greater tribute to the way this creation of Kālidāsa affected the imagination of later poets than the fact that in Sanskrit itself, in all the regional languages of India including the southern-most Tamil and in other countries too, e.g. Ceylon, poets went on trying their hand at imitations of *Meghadūta*.

The name *Meghadūta* means "the cloud-messenger." In

External Service for China, AIR, Delhi.



it a lover separated from his beloved sends her a message through a cloud. The lover belongs to the class of semi-divine beings called Yakṣas of the city of Alakā on the Himalayas ruled over by Kubera, the god of wealth. The Yakṣas were always leading an idyllic life of love and enjoyment; the lover in the poem had naturally become negligent of his duty and his master Kubera thought that a year of separation from his beloved would chasten him and accordingly pronounced a curse; the result was that the Yakṣa, deprived of his glory and status, was thrown to a place far away from his home, in Rāmagiri, a forest of hill and dale, south of the Vindhya mountains. Rāmagiri, the place of his sojourn, was full of the memories of the happy time that Rāma, the hero of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*, had spent there. Living all alone in that enchanted Rāmagiri, the poor Yakṣa had become so emaciated that the golden armlet he was wearing had slipped down. He had managed to pull through the greater part of the year of his exile, but the rains and the clouds seem more cruel to separated lovers than even the festive spring.

The poem opens with the Yakṣa listlessly strolling about in Rāmagiri, and suddenly seeing before him a cloud settling on the slopes of the mountain. As the swarthy cloud, the first of those to herald the monsoon, rolls, appearing to hit the side of the mountain, the Yakṣa feels as if every one of those hits is falling on his own heart. For, as the poet says, at the sight of a cloud, even those in the company of their beloveds, become deeply affected, their arms unconsciously twining into an embrace; what to say of those who are far away from their beloveds? The lover becomes almost mad; he imagines that the cloud, which would move northwards is a human messenger and friend, and he begins to welcome it, to offer it worship, eulogise its greatness and benevolence, and with folded hands, begins to entreat it to bear his message of hope and assurance of early reunion to his beloved in distant Alakā. The poet says, "Where is the cloud, a congeries of fire, smoke, water and wind, and where is the message to be borne by beings endowed with intelligent faculties?" Quite unmindful of this, owing to his longing, the Yakṣa begs the cloud; thus indeed are those stricken with love, innocent of even the discrimination of the sentient from the insentient. The Yakṣa goes on addressing the cloud

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and describes in detail the route that the cloud-messenger should take to reach Alakā, the city of Alakā and his own mansion there. He describes his own wife, gives the actual message and blesses the cloud in the end, that in return for this act of service to a suffering lover, the cloud, for its part, would never be separated from its own beloved.

The appeal of the very idea of the poem, and then, of its exquisite handling by the poet, can be easily imagined. Naturally making the breeze, cuckoo, parrot, swan, peacock, every imaginable thing, including one's own mind, as messenger, poets started sending their messenger-poems. Strangely we have a striking echo of this in Chinese poetry where, making the same cloud the messenger, a poet of the second century A.D. sends a message, not from the lover to the beloved, but from the lady to her lover:

"O floating clouds that swim in the heaven above

Bear on your wings these words to him I love".

Among modern Western poets, not only did Goethe admire Kālidāsa's poem, but Schiller, in his play, *Maria Stuart*, made the captive Queen of Scots call the clouds passing southwards to greet the land of her youth:

"Hurrying clouds! Sailors of the air!....

Greetings from me to the land of my youth.

I have been captured, I am in bondage;

Ah! I have no messenger.

Free in the airs is your course;"

It is just possible that in this lyric, poet Kālidāsa himself sojourning in Central India owing to some event in his life, feels nostalgic about his home in the north and sends this message to his own beloved. Historical scholars have tried to piece together certain facts to render such a supposition possible.

The poem extends to just a little over a hundred verses in the metre called *mandākrāntā*, the gracefully overpowering cadence, which has since been considered the forte of the poet. In the first part, the poem describes the sights and scenes on the route to be taken by the cloud—mountains, forests, rivers, temples, battle-fields and renowned cities and each verse is a finely drawn miniature. The richness and power of the poet's imagination



are seen in the many striking fancies that he works with this amorphous floating mass of a cloud, which at the bidding of the magic wand of the poet, takes a variety of appropriate shapes and forms. In some of these descriptions it is remarkable how effectively the poet, placing himself in the position of the cloud, presents the picture of a mountain or a river as it would look from an aerial view; but the pictures are rendered more beautiful by the bright lining of feeling which the poet gives them, for the frenzied lover sees the entire nature in images of love.

As the cloud reaches the Himalayas, it would see the Yakṣa's city, Alakā lying across the slopes of the mountain like a beloved lady on the lap of her lover. In that city of pleasure the cloud would find the mansion of the Yakṣa on the bank of a pool, with its park and a peacock resting on a crystal pole in that park. When the two were together, the Yakṣa's wife would beat the rhythms with her palms tingling with wristlets and that peacock would dance for the yakṣa's delectation. In that mansion, the cloud could very easily identify the Yakṣa's wife both by reason of her extraordinary beauty and the sure marks of suffering caused by this long separation from her lover. She would be trying one thing after another to while away the hours and days hanging heavily on her, drawing a picture of her lover, recapitulating something about him with the parrot which had been joining in their pleasant chats, or playing on the lute a song about her lover; she would be counting the days of the exile by laying a flower for a day on the door-step. Look at the tenderness of the Yakṣa when he tells the cloud: "If, when you approach her, she has fallen into a slight sleep owing to the strain of the weary days, please do not disturb her, for the sleep might give her a precious dream and in the dream, she might perhaps be enjoying my company".

The first words of the message would be to assure her of her lover's safety, his enquiring about her welfare and the hope that ere long he would be by her side; for, as the poet says at the outset, hope is the stalk which holds the drooping, flower-like hearts of lovers. As for the Yakṣa, he, as much as his wife, is at a loss to know how to comfort himself; if he drew a picture of hers on a rock with mineral chalk, tears would teem in his eyes and prevent his very look at the image; he would of course fre-

quently look north and embrace the breezes blowing southwards however chilly they might be, for they bore the warmth of his wife whom they should have touched in their northern home; he would look at slender creepers and imagine in them the likeness to her body; as the timid deer around looked at him, he would be reminded of his wife's own looks; as the peacocks turned their rich plumage, his thoughts would immediately go to her long tresses; different parts of her form he could manage to see in different replicas in nature, but the whole of that exquisite form, she alone could reveal to him. And it would not be long before she would reveal it to him, for there were only four months more; joy follows sorrow; the wheel of fortune turns and none here is condemned to eternal suffering; and when the two come together, the stored up desires, heightened by the separation, could be enjoyed with a fresh intensity. Even in this pure lyric, Kālidāsa touches upon his philosophy of love; of passion requiring the fire of separation and suffering to purify it and to weld the two hearts together all the more strongly.

## II\*

In love, in description of nature and its effect on human-heart, in imagery and figures of comparison, in imagination which gives shapes to airy nothings, if in all these Kālidāsa is unrivalled, his short lyric *Meghadūta* forms the single most effective illustration of the above mentioned qualities of the immortal poet's genius. In Chinese poetry a shepherd addresses a cloud, in the Buddhist *Jātaka* a crow is sent as a messenger, in the *Rāmāyaṇa* Hanumān carries Rāma's message to Sītā and in the story of Nala, the swan plays the role of the love-messenger. These and some more which research may discover, cannot take away from *Meghadūta* the originality of the poet's conception and treatment, and the uniqueness of his creation. That the passage of time cannot dim its brilliance or dull its appeal is borne out not merely by our continuing to enjoy it to this day, with all the widening of the frontiers of our literary appreciation to the very ends of the earth, but also by the irresistible urge it creates in sensitive minds given to poetic effort, to run after, as it were, this cloud and fashion their songs on

\*AIR, Madras, in the series "Age cannot wither"



this ageless lyric. More than a hundred poets in Sanskrit and in other Indian languages and even in Sinhalese have imitated it, and this homage of imitation is still growing.

The lover, the poet and the madman are said to be of the same mind and here in this poem does one see that frenzied imagination in which the poet becomes a lover or *vice versa*, in the madness of his love-lorn state. While describing the route that the cloud-messenger is to take to reach the lover's home in Alakā, Kālidāsa no doubt gives, with his wonted touches, exquisite miniatures of places and scenes, of hill and dale, of river, city and countryside; but each such cameo seems to glow as it were with the emotional edge which the poet gives it; for the lover's eyes see not merely the hills and the rivers, but also images of lovers and beloveds, and being one keenly alive to the pangs of separation, the separated Yakṣa pleads with tender heart that no lover or beloved should continue in that state of suffering. Now the Yakṣa asks the cloud to flash his lightning, intimidate the city damsels and play with them, or if they happen to go to their lovers at night, to light their path and help them. "Come down upon river Vetravatī, kiss her and quench your thirst". "Now, poor Sindhu, the river, lies on your way, grown thin as if in separation; give her your attention so that she may gain her normal form"!

When the Yakṣa opens his apostrophe to the cloud, he calls it *Kāma-rūpa*—one who could take any desired form; it is not as if the poet means only that, like any divine or semi-divine or other person enjoying some boon, the cloud too could take a human form to greet the Yakṣa's wife at Alakā; the wind-wafted cloud could indeed take any shape. At the wafting of the magic wand of Kālidāsa's *kāma* (fancy), see what a variety of forms (*rūpa*) the cloud takes; it is just like some pulp in the poet's hand which he moulds into a fresh form in almost each verse. Now it is a friend, now a lover, now a wayfarer, now a kindly refuge of the afflicted; now it plays like a dark elephant hitting the mountain sides; now with its dark form and the multi-coloured rainbow, it would resemble Kṛṣṇa with the peacock feathers; at the Mahākāla temple at Ujjain, with its rumbling sounds, it could play the role of the dark broad drum for Śiva's dance or at the Śiva's evening *Tāṇḍava*, it could come round and

take the place of the just-torn, dark-red elephant-hide wrapping Śiva at the back; on reaching the Himalayas, its dark mass would sit on the snow-white cliff like a cloud of clay on the horn of Śiva's bull, with its rumblings echoing in the mountain-caves, it could provide a drum accompaniment to the celestial damsels singing there of Śiva; when it lengthens itself out and proceeds northwards, it would resemble the leg of Trivikrama stretched across in the firmament; the dark cloud spreading round a snow-white slope of the Himalayas would produce the picture of white Balarāma with his dark apparel; on the Himalayas, Śiva would be strolling about the cliffs with Pārvatī, and in the ups and downs, would have to give her a helping hand, when the cloud should freeze its waters and make itself serviceable like a flight of steps for Pārvatī to climb comfortably; it need not remain long in this state, for when the celestial damsels come and play with it by striking their hard bracelets on it, it could spray out water like a shower-bath; and if they refuse to stop tormenting it, it might just emit a few thunders and scare them away. It should quickly run taking the form of a small elephant and sitting on an elevation, cast its glances into the house with the glimmering of its lightning!

Taking these and myriad other forms, the cloud could wander as it pleased, and for the service it does by hastening the union of separated lovers, Kālidāsa blesses it that wherever it might go, as a lover it would never be separated from its own beloved, the flashing lightning:

*iṣṭān deśān vicara jalada prāvṛṣā saṁbhṛtaśrīḥ  
mā bhūd evaṁ kṣaṇam api ca te vidyutā viprayogaḥ*

Like the *Megha*, the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa has wandered today to all parts of the world, undergoing diverse translations but receiving uniform praise.



## KĀLIDĀSA AS A DRAMATIST\*

### VIKRAMORVAŚĪYA

Dr. V. Raghavan

The name of Kālidāsa is pre-eminent in Sanskrit literature not only in the domain of poetry, but also in the domain of drama. There were before Kālidāsa dramatists of repute whom the poet himself mentions in the prologue to his *Mālavikāgnimitra* with which he makes his first bow on the stage—masters like Bhāsa, Saumilla and Kaviputra, who had established their reputation. With the exception of Bhāsa, who is involved in controversy, the others are nothing more than names to us. The modest bow that Kālidāsa made with his court-romance of King Agnimitra and Princess Mālavikā and the hesitation with which he asked: "Will this effort of a contemporary poet go with the audience?" was soon replaced in his next heroic comedy, *Vikramorvaśīya*, by a more confident note, in which he referred to himself as having earned the friendship of the audience. Already he could say in the second play that the actors had better be careful with their portions. By the time he wrote *Abhijñānaśākuntala*, he had gained his reputation as a dramatist; he made no plea but straightway announced that a new play of Kālidāsa was to be produced and added: let every part be attended to with special effort. The verdict did not wait for long to be pronounced and the emergence of the three plays of Kālidāsa threw into oblivion all that was there before him. Henceforth all plays that were written took Kālidāsa for the model. All *Nāṭakas* with heroic themes were patterned after *Śākuntala* and any romantic play relating to a historical king, after *Mālavikāgnimitra*. In fact, on the evolution of the type of play called *Nāṭikā* which was a graft of the heroic *Nāṭaka* and the social *Prakarana*, which took its characters not from the Purāṇic *rājārṣis* but from kings of historical times, which shortened its length and number of Acts.

\*AIR, Madras, Kālidāsa Day Celebrations, 1960.

and which aimed at the increase of interest by introducing music and dance or other artistic features as integral parts of the theme, Kālidāsa laid the path with his *Mālavikāgnimitra*. It would appear that the very description of *Nāṭikā* in works of dramaturgy is mostly based on *Mālavikāgnimitra*.

*Mālavikāgnimitra* is sustained by a well-organised story; with the ingenious design of the Vidūṣaka forming its base, it has a political background and, more than these, attractive motifs like the dance-contest and the *Aśoka-dohada*. But it does not give scope to Kālidāsa's idealism and philosophy which find their fullest expression in *Abhijñāna-śākuntala*, which may be called the poet's final testament. At the end of the first play, the poet just prays to Caṇḍī that she may be gracious towards him and that was enough for him so far as his adversaries were concerned. At the end of the second play the poet prays that the divorce between learning and wealth be ended and that men of quality thrive well. But at the end of his last play, the poet not merely asks for good rule on earth and respect for learning, but as an evolved soul, he prays that as far as he himself was concerned, Lord Śiva might grant him spiritual salvation. Not that the poet was not a religious or spiritual aspirant earlier. Tradition connects his very name with a story of devotion. His *Kumārasambhava* is his homage to his favourite divinity, *Pārvatī-Parameśvara*. But it is in *Śākuntala* that the mellowed glow of the poet's genius and the ripeness of his personality are seen. The *tapas* which *Kumārasambhava* depicts as the welding force, more potent than physical beauty, is worked out, on the plane of drama, through *Vipralambha-rasa*, *taptena taptam ayasā ghaṭanāya योग्याय*, which removes the dross of the initial physical attraction and makes the union truly spiritual and abiding.

While Bharata, on the side of theory, sets forth the principles of Sanskrit drama, it is in Kālidāsa's plays that one understands the practical details of the unique way in which the Sanskrit dramatic technique works. To realise this fully, one should not merely content oneself with reading the plays of Kālidāsa, but see them played or better still, rehearse and produce them. The close integration of nature and the feelings of men and



women and the lyrical miniatures have all a direct bearing on the idealistic and artistic production technique; the elimination of the sets and too elaborate stage-directions determine the very character of the writing of the text of the play and the dialogues; and that this method is more effective or affective than the spectacular can be easily seen—what is necessary is a re-thinking of our idea as to the fundamental idea of drama. The drama is not a series of moving pictures; nor is it a pure poem. Hence, in its definition of drama, Sanskrit dramaturgy lays equal emphasis on the *drśya* and *śravya*.

Another important principle of Sanskrit dramaturgy which Kālidāsa illustrates in the most luminous manner is that the theme or story, however important, is to be the support of *rasa*. How much scope Kālidāsa has laid in between his words and dialogues, for subtleties of emotional expression can be fully realised when one takes his plays for actual production. His sense of humour and precise perception of human behaviour do find their place in his plays. We cannot imagine what he would have done or achieved if he had taken up a pure social theme like the author of *Mṛcchakaṭika*. It is clear from his poems and plays that his spirit revelled not in that line; but in his lesser homely figures like the Vidūṣaka and the Cetiṣ, the fisherman and the police, as also in the greater ones like Agnimitra or Agnivarṇa, his realistic touches are clearly seen, though, true to his genius, he adopts the delicate and suggestive way, and not the obvious and expressed way. Further it is in the dialogues in his plays that one finds the only example of what the prose of a master of Sanskrit like Kālidāsa is like. In the words of Aurobindo, Kālidāsa's dialogues in his plays are "admirable prose in Sanskrit literature, perfectly simple, easy in pitch, and natural in tone with a shining, smiling, rippling lucidity".

The kernel of the theme of *Vikramorvaṣīya* goes to great antiquity as is borne out by the dialogue between Purūravas and Urvaśi found in the hymns of the *Rgveda*. In Kālidāsa's hand, the theme undergoes a complete modification and Urvaśi, the heartless heavenly courtesan who abandons Purūravas, comparing herself and womenfolk to hyenas, is thoroughly metamorphosed by the poet into a perfect lady in love, with her heavenly features

kept in their barest minimum to serve such technical needs as coming down or remaining in hiding. She voluntarily falls in love with Purūravas and comes back to him of herself. The disappearance of Urvaśī and the consequent suffering of Purūravas are made more human and natural by the introduction of the element of jealousy, by the curse of the Kumāravana, and by Urvaśī becoming for a time a creeper and not becoming lost for ever, by the motif of the uniting gem, *Sanḡamanīya-maṇi* and the reunion of Purūravas and Urvaśī. The fourth Act, in which Urvaśī turns into a creeper and the mad Purūravas goes about raving and, like Rāma in the end of *Āraṇyakāṇḍa*, asks news of his beloved from every animal and bird, tree and mountain is a lyrical and dramatic masterpiece. In the fifth Act, the reunion is ennobled further by Urvaśī's gift of a son, Āyus, to Purūravas and to complete the reincarnation of the *R̥gvedic* Urvaśī, Kālidāsa makes her abide with Purūravas.

Out of a hoary myth of the nation, the national poet has recreated a heroic love-play. In the words of Aurobindo who interprets the myth "Such a man (*i.e.* Purūravas) alone was fit to aspire to and win the incarnate Beauty of the world and its sensuous life, the *Apsarā* who sprang from the thigh of the Supreme". As Tagore has conceived, Urvaśī is "the spirit of imaginative beauty in the universe, the unattainable ideal for which the soul of man is eternally panting . . . There is but one who can attain her, the man whose mind has become one mass of poetry and idealism and has made life itself identical with poetry . . . . . and whose soul holds friendship and close converse with the Gods. This is Purūravas "the noise of whom had gone far and wide, whose mother was Ilā, divine aspiration" and whose "near ancestors therefore are the Sun and the Moon". For her, he leaves everything. His soul must wander through all nature seeking her, imagining her or hints and tokens of her in everything he meets "It is therefore one of the most profound and splendid of the many profound and splendid allegories in the great repertory of Hindu myth, that Kālidāsa has rendered into so sweet, natural and passionate a story of human love and desire."

According to some treatises, the *Vikramorvaśīya* belongs to the type of play called *Toṭaka*. Whatever its other features,



its main characteristic is that the gods and the humans mingle here and the drama passes from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven. It is such bridges between the two worlds, the mortal and the divine, the material and the spiritual, that Kālidāsa has built in his dramatic creations.

Dr. K. N. Dandekar

• About classical literature in Sanskrit it is said that among its poetical works the dramas are most charming and among these dramas Śakuntalā of Kālidāsa is the best. The tastes of men, we are told, differ as much as their sentiments. But even so, there could hardly be any two opinions about the supreme charm of this great classic. What has made Śakuntalā a great work of art? Is it its sublime theme or superb characterization, its unique plot-construction or its exquisite lyrics of love and nature? It is certainly all this and something more. For it is not only the poet's knife and subject to dissection, this beautiful flower created by Kālidāsa's genius. By doing so, we shall only be destroying its eternal freshness and fragrance. Let us view it as a whole.

Draupadī, the noble and heroic king of the race of Pandus, was present on a hunt. In pursuit of a deer, he entered the hermitage of the great sage, Kasyapa. Just when the king was about to shoot an arrow at the deer, a voice was heard appealing to him to desist from slaying that innocent creature because it belonged to the hermitage. Then at the invitation of the hermit, the king approached the hermitage and beheld there a charming hermit-land with her two friends, watching the young plants. It was not in vain that the king perceived an omen—a troubling in the right arm—even in that tranquil spot. The king listened to the talk of the three maidens. But were they really only three? No; the poet has introduced also a fourth, namely nature, as living and as full of feelings as Śakuntalā herself. In his dramas, Kālidāsa employs nature not merely as a background, but as a living and soulful character. The nature of Kālidāsa's dramatic art is now more fully represented than in Śakuntalā. Śakuntalā is part of nature's life, and nature is part of Śakuntalā's personality. Thus, by Śakuntalā's maiden love, the king won

## KĀLIDĀSA'S ŚĀKUNTALA

Dr. R. N. Dandekar

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\*AIR, Bombay, 1949



dered who she was. Could she be the Brahmin patriarch's daughter? But Duṣyanta had not long to wait for an answer. Being disturbed by the watering of the trees, a bee left the jasmine-vine and flew towards her face, perhaps under the impression that it was a fully blossomed flower! Śakuntalā was greatly annoyed, while the romantic king looked on. Indeed he became jealous of the bee and said :

Eager bee, you lightly skim  
O'er the eyelid's trembling rim  
Toward the cheek aquiver.  
Gently buzzing round her cheek,  
Whispering in her ear, you seek  
Secrets to deliver.  
While her hands that way and this  
Strike at you, you steal a kiss,  
Love's all, honey-maker.  
I wonder what is her name,  
Her caste, and whence she came—  
While you, my rival, have already taken her.

Śakuntalā entreated her friends to save her from the dreadful bee, but they, smilingly, asked her to call upon king Duṣyanta; for, as they said, pious groves were in the protection of the king himself. That was indeed a good opportunity for Duṣyanta to present himself. What a clever and romantic way to bring the hero and the heroine together! Of course, Duṣyanta concealed his identity. In the course of his talk with the hermit maidens, he came to know the details about Śakuntalā's nativity; she was the royal sage Viśvāmitra's daughter born of the divine nymph, Menakā. Now the King understood, for

To beauty such as this  
No woman could give birth;  
The quivering lightning flash  
Is not a child of earth.

The king's wishes became hopes. As a Kṣatriya king, he was entitled to marry the royal sage's daughter. This narration of the history of Śakuntalā's birth possesses deeper dramatic significance. It at once determines the character of Śakuntalā. She inherits her stern austerity from her father and her free, romantic nature from her mother. Her nurture in the hermitage

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invested her with innocence and simplicity. Thus, in an effortless manner, the dramatist throws light on his heroine's character and prepares us for the inevitable conflict in her life. Throughout the first Act, through Śakuntalā's speeches and actions, the poet very effectively suggests the struggle between innocence, bashfulness and simplicity on the one hand and a strong urge for self-expression on the other.

This experience, occasioned by Duṣyanta's visit to the hermitage, was quite new to her. It came upon her almost suddenly, she was not at all prepared for it! Instinctively she knew what love was, but she had never before met a lover! When her friends began to tease her playfully about Kaṇva's intention to give her to a suitable bridegroom, Śakuntalā, feigning anger, prepared to go away. But she must not go. For, as her friend Priyamvadā told her, she owed her the watering of two trees. Seeing with his lover's eyes that Śakuntalā was already tired, Duṣyanta remits her debt by offering a ring to her friends. When finally the time came for the hermit-maidens to return to the cottage, a voice was heard from behind : "Hermits, prepare to defend the creatures in our pious grove; king Duṣyanta is hunting in the neighbourhood." With the delightful artfulness which comes naturally to a maiden in love, Śakuntalā, while departing, told her friends that her foot had been pierced by a sharp shoot of *darbha* grass and her dress had got caught on a twig. She, therefore, asked them to wait while she freed herself, thus tarrying to exchange a lingering glance with the lover.

After meeting Śakuntalā, Duṣyanta did not feel inclined to return to his capital. Together with his retinue he remained in the neighbourhood of Kaṇva's hermitage, apparently to enjoy the chase. With his mind full of thoughts about Śakuntalā, the king spoke to his friend, Vidūṣaka, of her superb charm :

She seems a flower whose fragrance none has tasted,

A gem uncut by workman's tool,

A branch no desecrating hands have wasted,

Fresh honey, beautifully cool,

No man on earth deserves to taste her beauty,

Her blameless loveliness and worth,

Unless he has fulfilled man's perfect duty

And is there such a one on earth ?



The king must prolong his stay. And soon he found a satisfactory excuse for it. The powers of evil disturbed the pious life of the hermits in the absence of the patriarch. The king was therefore asked to remain for a few nights to protect the hermitage. Thereupon the king sent back to the capital his friend and soldiers and stayed on in the pious grove.

The third Act opens with clear indications of the growing love on the part of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā. Since the king's arrival, the rites of the hermits continued undisturbed, but the king himself was greatly disturbed in mind. He reproached Madana, the god of love : "Moon and thou, O Manmatha, inspire confidence only to deceive the host of lovers."

Thy shafts are blossoms; coolness streams  
From moon-rays; thus the poets sing;  
But to the love-lorn, falsehood seems  
To lurk in such imagining;  
The moon darts fire from frosty beams;  
Thy flowery arrows cut and sting.

Śakuntalā too had become seriously ill on account of the heat as her friends first imagined. But when the king saw her lying upon a flower-strewn bed attended by her two friends, the real cause of her malady became quite evident :

With salve upon her breast  
With loosened lotus-chain,  
My darling, sore depressed,  
Is lovely in her pain.  
Though love and summer heat  
May work an equal woe,  
No maiden seems so sweet,  
When summer lays her low.

Śakuntalā and her friends, on the other hand, had not known the effects of love before. Her friends, however, suspected Śakuntalā's case to be similar to that of love-stricken persons described in epics and legends. Being pressed to tell what caused her illness, Śakuntalā said: "Ever since I saw the good king who protects the grove, out of my desire for him, I have been in this condition". By means of this simple scene, Kālidāsa has portrayed the whole character of the hermit-maidens, their natural, innate simplicity and trustfulness, their inexperience—but not ignorance—about

the outside world. Śakuntalā's friends are happy to know that her affection is placed on one worthy of her. But then, does not a great river always flow into the sea ? They had noticed that the good king also was clearly in love with Śakuntalā, as his tender glances and emaciated body showed. At the instance of her friends, therefore, Śakuntalā wrote a message on a lotus leaf, conveying her feelings to her royal lover :

I know not if I read your heart aright;

Why, pitiless, do you distress me so ?

I only know that longing day and night

Tosses my restless body to and fro,

That yearns for you, the source of all its woe.

At this stage, the king, who was listening came forward and confessed :

Though love torments you, slender maid,

Yet he consumes me quite,

And daylight shuts night-blooming flowers

And slays the moon outright.

The stage was thus set for the consummation of the love of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā. And in due course they were secretly married by mutual consent according to the *Gāndharva* form. But this was not to be a lasting union. Kālidāsa wants to elevate this love from the sphere of physical beauty. This becomes possible through long and austere penance, *tapasyā*, which the two lovers were made to undergo.

An inkling of this is given at the very opening of the fourth Act. The great sage Durvāsas, the irascible, came to Kaṇva's hermitage. At that time, Śakuntalā, who was in charge of the hermitage, was deeply engrossed in thoughts about Duṣyanta and was, therefore, absent-minded. She thus failed to accord to the honoured guest the respectful welcome that was due to him. The quick-tempered sage, therefore, while departing cursed Śakuntalā :

"Because your heart, by loving fancies blinded,

Has scorned a guest in pious life grown old,

Your lover shall forget you though reminded,

Or think of you as of a story told."

Śakuntalā herself was quite unconscious of this sad happening.



But her friends, who had heard the curse, fell at the feet of Durvāsas, angrily striding away, and pleaded on Śakuntalā's behalf. The sage relented and said : "My words must be fulfilled, but the curse shall be lifted when Śakuntalā's lover sees some token of recognition." That was indeed a great relief. For, when the good king went away, had he not put a ring, engraved with his own name, on his beloved's finger, to remember him by ?

The main scene of the fourth Act represents Śakuntalā's departure to her husband's home. Father Kaṇva approved of her marriage with Duṣyanta and was happy to know that she already bore the kingly seed. The scene of Śakuntalā's parting from the hermitage is one of the most touching scenes in the entire dramatic literature. The whole atmosphere breathes of holiness, sweetness and tenderness. Śakuntalā sets out for her husband's home carrying with herself the blessings of the holy sage, Kaṇva, and the good wishes of the whole forest-world.

In the fifth Act, we seem suddenly to enter quite a new world ! The simplicity, freedom and innocence of the hermitage vanish, and the royal court is presented before us. And this change is cleverly suggested through a few casual remarks of the two young hermits who escorted Śakuntalā to Duṣyanta's capital. It also prepares the necessary background for the main scene—the repudiation of Śakuntalā. At the opening of the Act, we find Duṣyanta filled with deep wistfulness for no apparent reason. Surely he was not separated from anyone whom he loved. Just at this psychologically significant moment, Duṣyanta receives the hermits from Kaṇva's hermitage, who convey to him the patriarch's message :

You are best of worthy men, they say;

And Śakuntalā, I know, good works personified;

The Creator wrought for ever and a day,

In wedding such a virtuous groom and bride.

"She is with child. Take her and live with her in virtue." Duṣyanta was greatly amazed at this message. 'What is this insinuation', he exclaims. The curse of Durvāsas had already taken effect. The king flatly denied that he had ever married Śakuntalā. How then could he take her, who was plainly with child, and confess himself an adulterer ? At this Śakuntalā feels

as if she had been struck with a thunderbolt. But suddenly a new hope was created in her mind. She could easily remove the king's doubts by showing him the ring which he had given her as a token of love. But, alas, touching her finger, she found that the ring was lost. How could it have been lost ? The old Gautamī suggested that, when Śakuntalā worshipped in the holy waters at Śākrāvātāra, the ring must have dropped unknown to her. This was indeed what had happened; but the king smilingly dismisses all this with the word : "Oh the woman's ready wit !"

It cannot be suggested that but for the dramatic device of Durvāsas' curse, the desertion of Śakuntalā would have been extremely cruel, and would have destroyed the very theme of the drama. Moreover, it is dramatically more effective to show that Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā suffered for no apparent fault of theirs. The curse-motif would not appear strained to the Indian mind which is deeply influenced by the doctrine of *karma*. And how dramatic is the conflict thereby presented before the king ! On the one hand, there is the word of the sage; on the other, his own honest conviction :

Not knowing whether I be mad  
Or falsehood be in her,  
Shall I desert a faithful love,  
Or turn adulterer ?

Another stroke of Kālidāsa's genius is seen at this stage. After her repudiation by Duṣyanta, Śakuntalā is not shown to have gone back to Kaṇva's hermitage. How could she now go back ? A miracle happened and Śakuntalā was carried away by a divine damsel to an unknown place—there to suffer her mighty grief.

Both Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā thus lose the paradise which they had attained in the course of the first three Acts. This is indeed a necessary condition to regain a more beautiful paradise, the road to which was *tapasyā*—austere penance. A fisherman found the royal ring which Śakuntalā lost at the holy Śacīrtha. It soon reached the king's hand, and at its very sight, the veil of forgetfulness created by Durvāsas' curse was lifted. Duṣyanta is now consumed by remorse. How cruel of him to have repudiated his beloved Śakuntalā ? Duṣyanta's remorse, so touchingly delineated in this Act, is indeed his *tapasyā*. In Śakuntalā's



case, on the other hand, with rare poetic insight, the poet declined to represent her mighty grief on the stage. Torn from the loving friends of the hermitage, hurled away from that world of beauty, peace and purity, disgraced by her husband, Śakuntalā now suffers alone. We are left only to imagine her deep sorrow. In the fire of this long and austere *tapasyā*, all dross is burnt away, leaving the pure gold of spiritual love to shine with greater beauty and brilliance.

While Duṣyanta was thus plunged in deep remorse, he received a message from his friend, Indra, the king of gods. He solicited Duṣyanta's aid to fight the demons. At this call of duty, the noble king overcomes his personal grief. After the battle, which was easily won, honoured by Indra, Duṣyanta was returning to his capital. On his way back, he stopped at the hermitage of Mārīca to pay his respects to the divine sage. There he saw a young charming boy boldly dragging a struggling lion's cub. He was Bharata, Śakuntalā's dear child, the offspring of the Puru royal seed. It was in Mārīca's hermitage that the abandoned Śakuntalā had been living her saintly life, full of resignation and disciplined by penance. The *tapasyā* of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā had borne fruit. Significantly enough, through their son, they are reunited in the eternal heaven of true love and beauty. What Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā gained easily, they also lost as easily. Nothing is won truly and eternally except through *tapasyā* and devotion.\*

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\*The English versions of the original stanzas from the *Śākuntala* cited here are from Ryder's translation of the drama.

## INDIAN CULTURE AS DEPICTED IN THE WORKS OF KĀLIDĀSA\*

Prof. V. V. Mirashi

The literature of a nation holds the mirror to its culture, which is reflected in it. Sanskrit literature is no exception to this rule. It is invaluable for understanding the glorious past of India. Several great kings, philosophers, administrators, poets, dramatists and artists flourished in the past and contributed to the glory of India. Their memory is kept green in the literature of the age. Daṇḍin says in his *Kāvyādarśa*—

“See ! The image of the glory of primeval kings reflected in the mirror of literature does not fade even now when they have ceased to exist !”

Culture varies from age to age. Still there are certain basic ideals which remain more or less constant and mould the life of a nation for ages. This is true of India as it is true of other nations. In the present talk we shall try to see how the ideals of Indian life are reflected in the works of Kālidāsa.

From very ancient times four *puruṣārthas* or aims of life have been recognised in India, viz., *dharma* or religious duty, *artha* or domestic well-being, *kāma* or enjoyment of life and *mokṣa* or liberation from the bondage of life and death. These aims were to be pursued in such a way that they would not come into conflict with one another. For this purpose the institutions of *varṇas* and *āśramas* were devised. The institution of *varṇas* or castes was based on the principle of division of labour. It was realised that for the stability of society it was necessary that some persons should devote themselves entirely to the study of the *Vedas* and the *Śāstras*, others to the practice of arms, some others to agriculture, trade and commerce, and the rest to arts, crafts and menial work. At first these occupations were not hereditary, but in course of time as priestly lore increased, military science

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\*AIR, Nagpur



developed, and occupational skill came to be handed down from father to son in the same family, the groups became hardened into castes. Again, it was realised that a man had to fulfil certain obligations to himself and to the society in which he lived. These were described as debts which a man owed to gods, fathers and sages. For discharging these, the institution of *āśramas* was devised. They were four, viz., the *Brahmacārin* or student, who by the *Vedas* paid off the debt he owed to the sages; the *Grhastha* or householder, who, by begetting sons, paid off the debt to his ancestors and contributed to the continuance of society; the *Vānaprastha* or hermit who retiring to the forest, contemplated on the problems of life and offered sacrifices to the gods; and finally, the *Sannyāsin*, who, renouncing the world, tried to realise his self and thereby to free himself from the bondage of life and death. The institutions of *varṇas* and *āśramas* were thus believed to be necessary for the development of human personality and for the stability and prosperity of society.

We get graphic pictures of *varṇas* and *āśramas* in the works of Kālidāsa. The Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas were the two dominant castes in ancient society. The Kṣatriyas, who were noted for their physical prowess, wielded royal power, the Brāhmaṇas, known for their intellectual power, guided them by their advice in the government of their kingdom. Where the two worked in harmony, they became irresistible like the union of fire and wind :

*Pavanāgni-samāgamohyayam sahitam brahma yad astratejasā.*  
*Raghuvamśa-VIII. 4.*

The Brāhmaṇas lived in hermitages where they devoted themselves to the study and the teaching of the *Vedas* and the *Śāstras* and the performance of sacrifices for the well-being of the society. They lived on the roots and fruits of trees in the forest and what little wild grain they could collect in the vicinity of the hermitage. They levied no fees for the education they imparted to the students in their charge. Kālidāsa condemns in no uncertain terms, the teacher who does teaching work only for his livelihood: *Yasyāgamah kevalajīvikāyai tam jñānapanyam vanijam vadanti* (*Malayikāgnimitra* 1-17). The students lived with the teachers and helped them in their household and sacrificial work. They were expected to pay some *guru-dakṣiṇā*

on the completion of their education, but in many cases the teachers refused to receive any. We read in *Raghuvamśa* that the teacher who had taught Kautsa fourteen *vidyās* would not accept anything from him by way of *guru-dakṣiṇā* since he had already received it in full in the form of the pupils' long-continued and uninterrupted devotion.

The boys and girls who lived in the hermitage were brought up in direct communion with nature. They tended the trees and animals of the hermitage with care and love. Violence was strictly prohibited. When Duṣyanta tried to shoot a deer near the hermitage of Kaṇva, he was immediately stopped by a hermit who shouted out, 'Oh King ! This deer belongs to the hermitage and must not be killed !' When Āyus, the son of Purūravas and Urvaśī, killed a bird in the hermitage of Cyavana, the sage immediately sent the prince away to his father on the ground that he had violated the discipline of the hermitage. The sages who led such pious and austere life in the hermitages were greatly venerated by ruling kings. When King Dilipa and his queen went to see Vasiṣṭha, they clasped his feet and begged for his blessings. For securing the necessary *guru-dakṣiṇā* for Kautsa, Raghu made preparations even for launching an attack on Kubera.

Kālidāsa gives an equally noble conception of an ideal king. In the first canto of *Raghuvamśa*, he gives a general description of the princes of the solar race. They held sway over the earth bounded by oceans, performed sacrificial rites according to rules, fulfilled the desires of suppliants, inflicted punishment on offenders, collected wealth only for spending it in charity and made conquests only for obtaining fame. They devoted themselves to the acquisition of knowledge in their childhood, sought pleasures in their youth, lived the life of a hermit in their declining years and finally left the mortal coil in yogic meditation. Their government was so efficient that theft was known only from the word expressive of it in the *kośas* (dictionaries). The taxes were light and were levied only for the welfare of the subjects. Kālidāsa had a clear conception of the Welfare State. King Dilipa, he says, was the real father of his subjects for he educated them, protected them and provided them with means of subsistence.



Kālidāsa's works paint a noble picture of family life. Of all the *āśramas*, the *Gṛhasthāśrama* or householder's life is the most important, for it can oblige all people, *sarvopakāraṁkṣama*. It is immaterial, says Kālidāsa, whether a person is male or female. It is the character that good people admire.

*Strī pumān ityanāsthaisā vṛttam hi mahitam satām.*

*Kumāra. VI.-12.*

He thus shows as much regard to women as he does to men. The wife is her husband's counsellor, friend and dear disciple in the instruction of fine arts :

*Gṛhiṇī sacivaḥ sakhi mīthaḥ priyaśiṣyā lalite kalāvidhau*

*Raghu. VIII.-67.*

He pays a well-deserved tribute to *pativratās* or chaste women. Sītā was a *pativratā* par excellence. Even when she was exiled by Rāma without any fault, she sent this message to him through Lakṣmaṇa—"After delivery, I shall try to practice penance fixing my eyes on the Sun, in order that even in my future life I shall have you for husband and shall not be separated from you". When Bharata bowed to her after her return from Lankā, his head was greatly sanctified by the touch of her feet. The chaste women who had their husbands and sons living were considered specially honourable. It was such women who had the honour to decorate Pārvati for her nuptial ceremony. Kālidāsa had a noble conception of conjugal love. He had depicted it very graphically in *Meghadūta*.

The affection which a Hindu father has for his daughter, the anxiety he feels for her marriage and the relief he experiences when after her marriage he sends her to her husband's home are beautifully described in the words of Kaṇva. "A daughter is indeed another's property. Having sent her to her husband, my mind now becomes exceedingly calm as if I have returned another's deposit." What better advice can a Hindu father give to his daughter as she proceeds to her husband's home than what the sage gave to Śakuntalā ? "Serve your elders. Be friendly towards your co-wives. Though ill-treated by your husband, do not, in anger, go against him. Be very courteous to servants and have no pride in prosperity. In this way, young women attain to the position of a housewife. The perverse are the bane of the family."

In the fisherman's scene in the *Śākuntala*, Kālidāsa enunciates the high principle that all work is noble. Whatever duty falls to one's lot, be it ever so low, should verily not be avoided. Kālidāsa has thus raised his voice against the treatment meted out to men of the lower castes in Hindu society.

Kālidāsa's works give us glimpses of the life led by the cultured people (*Nāgarakas*) of those days. The arts of painting, music and dancing were cultivated and received royal patronage. Duṣyanta's description of how he is going to paint the background of Śākuntalā's picture shows what excellence was achieved in landscape painting. Kālidāsa describes that when Kuśa removed his capital from Ayodhyā, lions prowled about in the deserted mansions of the city and tore open the temples of the elephants painted in the frescoes on their walls. This brings out vividly the realism of the pictorial art. Dancing was appreciated not only at the royal courts, but it was part of the service for the worship of the deities in temples. It was cultivated by princesses and courtesans who attained special proficiency in it.

In religious matters there has always been toleration in India and this is reflected in the works of Kālidāsa. Though he was a devotee of Śiva, he has praised Brahmā in *Kumārasambhava* and Viṣṇu in *Raghuvamśa* with the same fervour. Finally, the yearning that every pious Hindu feels for final liberation from worldly existence is reflected in the poet's *Bharatavākya* in *Śākuntala*:

"May the self-existent Śiva, with His all-embracing power, put an end to my rebirth"

the anxiety he feels for her marriage and the anxiety he feels for her husband's home are when after her marriage he sends her to her husband's home are beautifully described in the words of Kāmya. "A daughter is indeed another's property. Having sent her to her husband, my mind now becomes exceedingly calm as if I have returned another's deposit." What better advice can a Hindu father give to his daughter as she proceeds to her husband's home than what the sage gave to Śākuntalā? "Serve your elders. Be friendly towards your co-wives. Though ill-treated by your husband, do not in anger go against him. Be very courteous to servants and have no pride in prosperity. In this way, young women attain to the position of a housewife. The petters are the bane of the family."



## KĀLIDĀSA AND THE UNITY OF INDIA\*

K. P. Narayanan

A fascinating vision of the fundamental unity of India has been handed down to us from the dawn of history. Vālmiki and Vyāsa are the earliest of our inspired torch-bearers. In line with them is Kālidāsa.

Kālidāsa saw, as Vālmiki and Vyāsa before him saw, the unity that runs like a silken thread through the diversity that India is and seeing, contributed substantially to the enrichment and strengthening of that unity.

The strength of this thread has to be maintained for the sake of India and if we may say so, in all humility, for the sake of the world. The role India plays on the world-stage—and who will deny India has a role to play?—will depend on, as Jawaharlal Nehru sharply reminded us, on our strength and unity.

That India must be strong and united, is the golden ideal visualised by our ancient seers for the glory of our motherland and the welfare of the world.

Some of the listeners will, I feel, be thinking that this just refers to the cultural unity of the country and has nothing to do with its political unity.

We all know that the political unity of India proved, in the past, to be a mirage and elusive. This line of thought, I admit, is true, but only to a limited extent.

In the distant past of Vikramāditya's days, Kālidāsa rose to the conception of a politically united India giving a lead to the world. Let us have a look at the background to this enchanting conception which the poet has conveyed to us in words that are like honey-laden flowers.

Kālidāsa lived in one of the most exalted periods of triumphant self-realisation in our history. He passionately loved his

\*AIR, Indore, 1958.

country. He was proud of her rich heritage of culture of which he himself was an outstanding embodiment and epitome.

Unflinching devotion to the motherland is a theme common to his compositions. Alluring visions of India's eternal loveliness danced for ever before his mind's eye and found beautiful expression in chiselled words and jewelled phrases that still echo down the corridors of time. He dreamt grandly and inspired people with the stuff of his dreams. He prided on India's glorious achievements and hoped for greater glories.

In that pride and hope Kālidāsa proclaimed that India's culture was like the Himalayas which he described as *Sthitah prthivyā iva mānadaṇḍah*, the measuring rod of the earth.

It is in this background and as a crown and climax to it that Kālidāsa rose to the conception of a united India. This conception found concrete expression in his world-famous *Śākuntala* where, as some of you may recall, we have the prophecy that Bharata will rule the whole world (*Sapta-dvīpāṃ jayati vasudhāṃ apratirathah*.)

Raghu's *digvijaya* as pictured by the poet portrays the ideal of a united India. The *Raghuvamśa* speaks of *Āsamudra-kṣiti*, that is, India from sea to sea.

The poet mentions that the Solar Kings ruled over, *Ananyaśāsanām ūrvīm*—the entire earth that knew no other ruler.

Kālidāsa, a star that rose during the happy period of our national glory and one that will shine for ever, had a synthetic view and vision of the unity of beautiful India which he loved so intensely.

Let me here refer to the idea mentioned in the *Vikramorvaśīya*: *Sāmanta-mauli-maṇi-rañjitapāda-pīṭham ekāpatratram avaner na tathā prabhutvam*. It means, "Rule of the earth under one umbrella on a throne whose foot-stool is bright with the light of gems in the bending crowns of kings doing homage to the emperor."

The mention of kings and emperors, I am sure, will not lead my listeners to draw inference about absolute rule and imperialism. India experimented with all types and varieties of states and governments, but finally found itself at home with constitu-



tional monarchy controlled by a cabinet working under the guidance of a popular assembly.

To get back to the idea of a united India under one rule—many of you may recall that the sages blessed king Duṣyanta with the birth of a son who would be '*Cakravartī*'—sovereign of the Universe.

Here is another illuminating verse of Kālidāsa—verse thirty-three in the seventh Act of *Śākuntala*—

*Rathenānudghāta-stimita-gatinā tirṇa-jaladhiḥ purā saptadvīpām jayati vasudhām apratirathaḥ*—that is to say, 'peerless in power, he will cross the seas with steady and unstumbling movement and will conquer the seven continents' and, *Ihāyam satvānām prasabha-damanāt sarvadamanāḥ punar yāsyatyākhyām Bharata iti lokasya bharaṇāt*—'he will be known as *sarvadamana* as he will have tamed wild beasts, and he will be known as Bharata as he will be the protector of the whole world.'

*Kumārasambhava* which gives an epic vision of Indian heroism, it has been suggested, has had a deep political significance. It is said that at that time India was threatened with invasion and thus the *Mahākāvya* on the birth of *Kārtikeya*, the warrior-god, was written to cheer up the despondent people.

According to Tagore, this *Mahākāvya* answers the questions humanity has been asking all along :

"How is the birth of the hero brought about, the brave one who can defy and vanquish the evil of the demon laying waste Heaven's own Kingdom ?"

The Hindu kings of that time, says Tagore, forgetful of their duties had become self-seeking epicureans and India was repeatedly being devastated by the Scythians. God Śiva himself was being lost in self-centred solitude of asceticism. And then as Tagore explains in his book, *Creative Unity*, paradise was lost. *Kumārasambhava* is the poem of paradise regained.

Kālidāsa's was the voice of warning against the gorgeous unreality of the age. He warned against the decline and downfall and urged the need for unity and strength. *Mālavikāgnimitra* contains a clear suggestion that there should be a strong central power for a united India.

This urge for India's unity, he infused into the people from his seat beside Vikramāditya's throne in Ujjain, the city which was to him *divaḥ kāntimat khaṇḍam ekam*, a brilliant fragment of heaven; and in so doing he became the echo and the embodiment of the national consciousness of the age that appeared to have reached and registered the zenith of civilisation. The age itself is as Aurobindo points out, the third great one after the moral age of Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* and the intellectual age of Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata*.

In fact Kālidāsa's is a 'Discovery of India' for his people. The passionate love of the country, the pride in her culture, the vision of a united India and the profound faith in her high destiny, the characteristics and qualities that Kālidāsa generated and cultivated are needed today more than ever.

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